

24 October 2026 – Anniversary of the Consecration of the church of Scourmont

1 Kings 8:22-23, 27-30; Acts 7:44-50; Luke 19:1-10

### Homily

After building himself a magnificent palace, David decided – in what he undoubtedly considered a moment of great magnanimity – to also build a residence for God (*'Behold, I live in a cedar palace, and God lives in a tent!'*) And God replied, *'You will not build me a house; I will build you one.'*

There is something similar in today's Gospel. Zacchaeus wants to see Jesus. Zacchaeus was not exactly a pious altar boy. He was a tax collector, and even the chief tax collector of Jericho. He was known in the city as a sinner. However, he had the heart of a child. He knew that Jesus was going to pass through his city and he wanted so much to see Him, that he forgot for a moment his importance and began to run like a child and climbed a tree to see Him.

What happened then? The roles were reversed. While Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, it was Jesus who saw Zacchaeus and looked at him with eyes full of love that transformed him. Jesus looked up at Zacchaeus in his sycamore tree and said to him, *'Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house.'* Jesus wants to enter Zacchaeus's home – not only his house, but his heart and his life, which is transformed.

We can then understand why Christian churches are not primarily houses of God, but houses of God's people, as saint Bernard reminded us in the text we read during the second nocturn of Vespers last night. This is because God does not want to dwell in houses made by human hands, but in the hearts of each one of us. *'Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?'*, saint Paul tells us.

It is because Christ dwells in our hearts that whenever two or three of us gather in the name of the Lord, He is there in our midst. And whenever we gather in our monastery church to express this communion in faith, love and hope through common prayer, we are the Church, we are the People of God, and Jesus is there, present among us. This, moreover, is the first form of Christ's real presence in the Church. And whenever we remember Him together in the Eucharistic celebration, He is there, present in all the fullness of His presence: the second form of real presence.

Is Zacchaeus not a little bit like each one of us? Or rather, are we not all a little bit like Zacchaeus? At the beginning of his Rule, Saint Benedict says that he wrote it for those who, having strayed from God through disobedience (or sin), wish to return to God through obedience. If we came to the monastery, it was because we were publicans, we did not have the poverty of heart preached by Jesus, and we were seeking a path to conversion. We found this path of conversion in the Rule of Benedict. We were too small to see God, so we climbed our sycamore tree, throwing ourselves with the ardour of novices into the observance of everything that could bring us closer to God. And then, fortunately, one day Jesus said to us: *"Come down from your sycamore tree. It is not from the height of your asceticism and virtue that*

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*you can see God. It is I who want to dwell in you, in your heart."* If we have heard these words, if we have let them penetrate our hearts, they have created in us an attitude of contrition and, above all, of sharing. *If I have wronged someone, I will repay them fourfold.*

Every time we are faithful to this ideal of seeking God and conversion, the words of Jesus that conclude the Gospel we have just heard apply to us: *"Today salvation has come to this house, for he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.*

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